



Importance and Benefits of the Use of Communicative Activities

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Abstract: Communicative activities play a fundamental role in language learning by providing students with opportunities to use language in meaningful and interactive contexts. These activities help learners develop fluency, accuracy, and confidence while encouraging collaboration, creativity, and cultural awareness. This paper categorizes communicative activities into oral and written forms, highlighting their various subtypes, such as discussions, problem-solving tasks, role-playing, and cooperative writing. Additionally, the study explores the benefits of communicative activities in enhancing student motivation, interaction, fluency, and real-world language application. The findings support the integration of communicative methods in language teaching to improve overall linguistic competence and engagement.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching; fluency; interaction; motivation; communicative competence; role-playing; discussion; problem-solving; cooperative learning.

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1. Importance of the Use of Communicative Activities

According to the type of practice, activities can be: mechanical, meaningful, and communicative.

Mechanical activities are represented by controlled activities, *meaningful activities* refer to the situations where students have the opportunity to make a meaningful choice and finally, *a communicative activity* represents real exchanges in all sorts of real social contexts.

An activity becomes communicative if it presents an information gap, a choice, and feedback. These are the three features of a communicative activity, according to Morrow, as we have seen in the previous chapters. There are various classifications for these communicative activities. If William Littlewood speaks about: pre-communicative activities and communicative activities, Jack C. Richards writes about: information gap activities, jigsaw activities, and other types of activities.

For Jeremy Harmer, communicative activities are grouped into:

☛ ORAL COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES

☛ WRITTEN COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES

☛ CORRECTING WRITTEN WORK

☛ PROJECTS

☛ LEARNER TRAINING (Harmer, 1991)

As we have seen in the previous chapter dedicated to communicative activities, all these ORAL COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES contain different other types of activities:

1. Reaching a consensus
2. Discussion
3. Relaying instructions
4. Communication games
5. Problem solving
6. Talking about yourself
7. Simulation and role play

1. Each of these types has various subtypes. It is the case of reaching a consensus. This type of activity encourages teamwork, tolerance, creativity, and confidence. At the end of the activity, the teams need to find a solution to a task that they have got.

There are also some sub-types of reaching consensus activities which are represented by:

- a) *moral dilemmas* and
- b) *learning decisions*.

a) *Moral dilemmas* consist of activities where students are given a certain situation and some alternatives. They work in groups and in the end they have to agree with each other and choose an alternative and motivate their choice.

b) *Learning decisions* imply exercises that are given to students where they have to decide what to fill in or how to match.

In one of my inspection lessons for the second degree, I used such type of activities for the eighth graders, in 2019. The moment they work together and receive the mysterious bags, they need to cooperate and reach a consensus in order to make a decision and then motivate it.

2. Another category of oral communicative activities is represented by discussion. Usually, there are students who all the time mention the fact they have nothing to say or have no opinion and sometimes there are moments when one of the students says something and another one reacts and discussions appear spontaneously. Still, there are techniques that can help us in order to get wonderful activities based on discussion. These techniques imply getting the students in groups and offer them the chance to talk a little bit about the new topic, allowing students time to prepare, especially when the topic is more difficult, and giving them a task.

There are three subtypes of this category:

a) *buzz group*,

b) *controversial topics* and

c) *debate*.

d) *The buzz group* refers to groups of three or four students that are given a topic and they need to find as many things as they can, related to that topic for a couple of minutes. Meanwhile, the teacher can notice if the topic is interesting for the students and well chosen.

e) *Controversial topics* make reference to those controversial statements that generate excellent discussion sessions.

f) *The debate* usually involves two groups that argue on something, they need to find arguments for or against the topic they are given and in the end they can be asked to vote for it. (Harmer, 1991)

An example of buzz group activity appears in one of my inspection lessons for the first degree, where I used a TIC, TAC, TOE game. It is a game that I have learned during my Erasmus + experience, Split Croatia in April 2023, when I participated in a formation course coordinated by the Inspectorate of Iași. It is a game based on group work and the members of the group need to prepare and find as many things as they can, in order to talk about the topic they chose for a limited time. It is a game that encourages cooperation and competition too.

3. The third type of communicative activities is relaying constructions. This type contains three other subtypes:

a) *exercises*

b) making models

c) describe and draw.

Exercises are a category of activities that implies instructions. Usually each student gives another one instructions and this one has to perform them. The success of the activity is determined by the way the instructions are understood and performed correctly. (Harmer, 1991)

An example is a lesson that took place on the 26th of March 2009. During this lesson the third graders learned to give instructions to their colleagues or perform instructions received from their teacher or from their colleagues, using realia, a teddy bear.

4. The fourth category of oral communicative activities is communication games. It is a category based on information gaps and students need to use all the language they know in order to fulfill a game-like task. There are four subcategories:

a) find differences/similarities,

b) describe and arrange,

c) story reconstruction and poem reconstruction (Harmer, 1991)

5. The next category of communicative activities is dedicated to problem-solving. Students usually have the chance to talk to each other and find a solution for a problem or a task that is given to them. In one of my lessons, students had to work together and find out the solution for a riddle, based on some words that had the letters scrambled. Some letters had numbers and the solution of the riddle was made of those numbers of those letters.

6. Talking about yourself is the sixth category of oral communicative activities. It implies topics of discussion about students. Students become more engaged when the teacher is interested in them and in their opinions. Thus activities should be about students and for the students.

From the multitude of activities that I have done, dedicated to this category I have chosen an activity for the I-st graders. It was a consolidation lesson about toys, on the 15th of March 2023 at Bălțați Secondary School. Each of them had to bring a favourite toy at school and present it. Picture 10 and 11 show all the students' enthusiasm for this lesson. They were so happy that finally they had the chance to show everybody their favourite toy and speak about it.

7. Simulation and role play represent the eighth category of oral communicative activities. They are the moments when students can pretend to be in some real life situations or take someone's role. Jeremy Harmer mentions in his book, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, Jones (1982), who claims that a simulation will work if it has the three characteristics: "reality of function", a "simulated environment" and "structure".

Role plays are excellent opportunities for students to take a new identity. Thus all responsibility is taken by this new identity and the student has more courage, becomes less anxious and more engaged in his or her actions.

One of my examples for this category is a wonderful play, named “Little Red Riding Hood” that was performed by some of my III-rd graders, on 8th of March 2013, as a surprise for the mothers that were present at the show of the classroom organized by the main primary teacher and me. Picture 11 shows an image of this activity. There is also attached a link of the film of this play to this picture.

Besides the oral communicative activities, WRITTEN COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES represents the second major category. It contains some other five sub categories:

1. relaying instructions
2. writing reports and advertisements
3. exchanging letters
4. co-operative writing
5. writing journals

1. Relaying instructions refers to those activities that imply instructions that must be performed. They are the same as for the oral communicative activities, but now they are written instructions.

There are three subtypes of relaying instructions:

- a) *making models*,
- b) *giving directions* and
- c) *writing commands*.

2. Writing reports and advertisements is a category that contains some other subtypes:

- a) *writing news broadcasts*,
- b) *writing tourist brochure* and
- c) *writing an advertisement* (Harmer, 1991)

Students usually work in groups to create such products. An example for such a type of activity is one of my lessons dedicated to Halloween, where students were grouped in teams and were asked to prepare a Halloween poster that at the end of the lesson each team had to present. Picture 12 shows a nice Halloween Poster, created by one of the teams.

3. Exchanging letters, 4. co-operative writing and 5. writing journals are the following three categories. These types of written communicative activities imply a lot of cooperation and feedback from each other. Students usually work in teams and manage to write stories together or different other types of written works. (Harmer, 1991)

According to Jeremy Harmer, there are some other three major categories that belong to communicative activities:

1. CORRECTING WRITTEN WORK,
2. PROJECTS and
3. LEARNER TRAINING. (Harmer, 1991)

1. CORRECTING WRITTEN WORK implies the teacher's interest in accuracy or content. Still, the main concern should remain the content of writing, as students need this feedback from the teacher. It can be done by the teacher or students too. The teacher usually uses a system of symbols when trying to correct all sorts of mistakes, but this system should be known by the students too.

For me, for example the sign “~” means half of a point in a test. Students know this sign, as I write to them from the first test the number of points for this sign. Picture 13 will be an exemplification of this kind of use of symbols for correcting a test. When they usually get the tests, they are given time to see their mistakes, to notice the problems that need to be solved and to take advantage of my feedback, especially in the case of content. They can also come and get all the necessary explanations and all the tests are usually discussed at the level of the classroom, without any nominations and corrected together. All these steps are important in order that correcting written work becomes effective. Sometimes students are allowed to correct themselves or even make an exchange of their tests and give their own marks.

2. PROJECTS represent a category where students manage to cooperate and create wonderful products by working together. They have the opportunity to explore many resources, various types of domains and find interesting and useful information that will contribute to the formation of their own personalities.

For me, The Day of European Languages is an excellent moment when I ask my students to prepare interesting projects. They have the chance to work in groups, in pairs and even individually, but the final result is the most important one and represents the expression of their hard work, involvement, passion, team spirit, creativity and competition.

All kinds of techniques, materials, methods. They usually come with presentations of big posters, powerpoint presentations, presentations of drawings, models and even presentations where drama, dance and reciting are used. Picture 14 and 15 and some samples where such projects were presented.

3. LEARNER TRAINING is a category that implies activities related to the learner's responsibility for his other learning. As it can be noticed in the chapter dedicated to communicative activities, this type of activities imply three areas, as it is mentioned in Jeremy Harmer's book, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*:

- a) “Personal assessment

b) *Learning strategies*

c) *Language awareness*” (Harmer, 1991, p. 149)

a) *Personal assessment* refers to the fact that students must become aware of their learning behaviour and think of the things that can help themselves and see what kind of learner they are. They usually can get a questionnaire where they have to answer some questions related to the way they learn or what kind of difficulties they have for learning certain things.

b) *Learning strategies* make reference to the learning strategies that students are encouraged to develop. Teachers can determine them to adopt certain behaviour through the use of some training. Students should be trained to use dictionaries, know how to manage with the new words, use the communicative activities correctly, use the textbooks and read to get the general meaning of something.

c) *Language awareness* means that the teacher can find some materials that can determine the student to become more aware of how the language is used. For example there can be used texts about certain grammar notions that students can actually work with, but at the same time they become aware of the way those particular grammar notions are used.

Friederike Klippel, in his *Keep Talking-Communicative fluency activities for language teaching*, speaks about two devices that can be helpful in creating communicative activities. He mentions: ”information gap and opinion gap”. (Klippel, 1984, p. 4)

Information gap refers to activities where students must exchange information in order to solve a task and opinion gap refers to activities that present controversial ideas or texts and students must tell their opinions about these ideas or describe them.

Usually, all these communicative activities reveal the principles of Communicative Language Teaching: the use of authentic materials, the development of Communicative Competence, fluency- achieved by the teacher’s roles of ”co-communicator”, facilitator, negotiator, monitor, purposeful communication(feedback) and interactivity(active participation and affective involvement). According to William Littlewood, in *Communicative Language Teaching-An introduction*, all communicative activities are very important due to the fact that they:

- ☛ “provide ‘whole task practice’...

- ☛ improve motivation...

- ☛ allow natural learning...

- ☛ can create a context which supports learning ...” (Littlewood, 1981, p.

170)

The development of communicative skills, the improvement of learner’s performance, the learner’s interest that is generated, the motivation that is increased,

the learner's awareness of his or her values and goals in life that is brought about, the increased learner's involvement and "the shaping of the learner's personality" (Klippel, 1984, p. 6) represent some other important aspects of communicative activities and the reasons for which they are used in the classroom. In Friederike Klippel's opinion, as it is mentioned in *Keep Talking-Communicative fluency activities for language teaching*, "it is far more important that the activities train the students to use their knowledge of the foreign language flexibly". (Klippel, 1984, p. 7)

2. Benefits of the Use of Communicative Activities in Teaching English

Almost twenty years ago, in 2004 I was one of the students of the University "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" from Iași, who was proud of graduating the Faculty of Letters and a dream came true. I was to become an ENGLISH TEACHER of ENGLISH. Since I was little, everyone who was asking me about what I was to become when I grew up, the answer was always the same, a teacher of English. It was so fascinating for me to be able to understand a different language and even more fascinating to be able to speak it and communicate with foreign people.

The moment I have chosen to follow a linguistic module, after my graduation, most of my teaching years were dominated by the importance of grammar. For me, grammar seemed the most important issue, the acquisition of grammar rules was the most significant thing. Unfortunately, things like literature, conversation lessons, drama lessons, and gamification were left behind or were not so dominating. There was also another disadvantage that I had. During my school years games and other communicative techniques have not been so used, so it was really hard to use them now as a teacher since there was not any occasion that I could learn them first. I still had an advantage. I loved improvising and making my lessons fun and relaxing and all the time I came with new ideas, realia or different worksheets in order to complete the textbook which sometimes seemed unattractive or too simple.

Since 2015, I have become the coordinator of educational programs and activities at Bălțați Secondary School. All the extracurricular activities that I have organized, I have been responsible for or I have been exposed to, made me see students from a totally different perspective. I have discovered students who were excellent actors, singers, dancers, hard workers, drawers, painters, presenters or had wonderful sport abilities or computer abilities.

My intention was not to make perfect English speakers of them, but I was willing to help them to manage to communicate or use English in real life situations. For me, it was enough to see that students could greet, present themselves, talk to a

foreigner, read something in English, answer different types of questions, translate something, understand English materials and write simple texts in English.

Although I still think that grammar is an important issue, communication seems the most significant goal in teaching a foreign language. Actually it must be a mixture of them, they need to coexist together.

Lately, all my English lessons included drama activities, music activities, a lot of games, project presentations, using posters or computer techniques, team activities and activities that included dance or crafts, although I have used all these activities from the beginning of my teaching career and I have always been a fan of them. All these communicative activities showed me the benefits.

My career of almost twenty years of teaching and the lessons plans used during this period in all the schools that I have been teaching, i.e. : Oțeleni Secondary School, Bălțați Secondary Schools, Strunga Secondary School and “C. F. Unirea” Pașcani High school represents the basis of this paper. Actually all the lesson plans, extracurricular project plans, the optional course project and the pictures added in Annexes demonstrate the use of communicative activities according to the principles of Communicative Language Teaching, where the main goal remains the development of learner’s Communicative Competence. They also represent resources for all those who intend to use them as an inspirational source or those who perhaps would like to analyse them. They show how communicative activities, introduced into the lesson, create a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom. The students feel more relaxed, become more interested in the topic of the lesson, engaged in the tasks they get and become ready to take risks. The use of these communicative activities generate dynamics, fluency, the development of collaborative relationships, appearance of the team and competitive spirit. The benefits of the use of these types of activities are numerous.

Teacher becomes just a moderator while students are the ones who actually do the work. Time appears to be limited, since each time students mention that the lesson should be longer. It passes too quickly when they are involved in all these types of activities.

Active participation is one of them. In order to encourage students to participate or become involved, the selection of activities is very important. Sometimes certain lessons are not so attractive, especially the grammar lessons, but due to the teacher’s freedom to select his or her materials and techniques, lessons can become more interesting.

The idea is to select things that are funny and seem easy to the students, but at the same time students have to know that the teacher does a serious thing and wants to help them to learn English.

There are students who think that they are not able to use English in some situations and the teacher should show them the contrary and make them feel

confident and encourage them all the time. It is in the teacher's power to make students seem to manage in using English.

In order to involve students in all sorts of activities, personal topics should be in mind too. Teacher has to select those things that seem interesting for students. "TIP, TAP, TOE" is an excellent example. This activity I discovered during my Erasmus+ experience, a project coordinated by the Inspectorate of Iași, which took place in Split, Croatia, in April 2023. I used it in my lesson too. Students are grouped in teams and each team chooses its own topics that the teacher will write in a chart on the blackboard. For one minute, each team will have to speak about a specific topic that is chosen from the chart. It is a wonderful game because students have the opportunity to speak about the things that they are interested in, they learn to cooperate, and they become competitive and have the chance to use English in a comfortable atmosphere. My third graders, the seventh graders and the eighth graders loved "TIP, TAP, TOE" and were eager to play it all the time.

Interaction is another benefit of the communicative activities. The moment these activities are related to students and their interests, they become more engaged and have the opportunity to speak and interact with others.

In 2017 and 2018, I worked with different groups of students in two e-Twinning projects: "Dreams for the Future" (2017) and "Let Your Students Save the World" (2018). These groups of students have been very enthusiastic to work on these projects because all the activities were related to their real life, their families, their hobbies, favourite things or traditional holidays. Some of the activities involved making drawings, personal presentations, making short films about themselves, and using the computers in the informatics lab in order to communicate with other students from different countries. In order that they could attend all these activities they had to use English.

On 6th of June 2023, I had a lesson dedicated to Sweden, in the seventh grade. At the beginning of the lesson I asked the seventh graders if they knew what day was that day and then I asked things about Sweden. We did a little bit of geography, as we spoke about the neighbours of Sweden, its population, capital, flag and language. Then, as I knew that they love music, I asked them about some names of Swedish bands or singers. They did not know names, so I gave them some examples of Swedish bands and singers that were very famous in the 1980s or 1990s, which they wrote on their copybooks. They were just curious, but not very interested in. But the moment I gave them the name of a famous duo from nowadays, DJ Axwell & Ingrosso, they became very enthusiastic. We listened to some short pieces of songs of the previous names of bands and singers and in the end I gave them a worksheet. On this worksheet there was one of these famous songs of this duo, named "More Than You Know", which they had to listen to and

fill in some blanks. I was happy to see them so interested in, engaged and active. After they have listened to the song twice, they managed to fill in the blanks and were ready to read it, so that everyone could check it. In the end, after they listened to it again, they asked me to put it on again and search for more songs by this duo.

So students become engaged and interact with each other the moment the selected activity is about them and offers them the opportunity to express themselves as they want to.

Another example is when during this school year (2022-2023) I have asked the eighth graders to write a virtual book together. The idea was to use English in a comfortable atmosphere, work in a cooperative way, and use imagination and computer abilities. Students were very happy to create this virtual book. It represented a presentation of each of them, a virtual book of their class. Using an application named Storyjumper, that I learned about in a formation course for teachers, in 2022 (CRED), they had to write a page about themselves, add an avatar and different effects and sounds. They worked in pairs in the informatics lab of the school. Then, in the classroom, they came in front of their colleagues and read their page from a virtual book. Since it had been their last year together, they were even much happier to create this virtual book. The activity was a success, as students were so happy to choose their own avatar, their own descriptions, feel so free to create their own presentations, without any restrictions.

Fluency is another benefit of these communicative activities. Students become fluent speakers the moment they are not corrected all the time, they are not interrupted and overcome all their inhibitions.

“Books and Tea” is one of my favourite activities which encourages students to read books, to express their opinions and get rid of all barriers while they have a fluent presentation.

In 2021 and 2022, I proposed the fifth graders and then the same class next year, the sixth graders. They were given a model of a short presentation for their favourite book that they had to fill in and then come to present it together with the book, perhaps a drawing too. The day they had to bring their presentations and books too, they had also to bring a cup for tea or hot chocolate, biscuits or cookies. I helped them to make their tea or hot chocolate and at the end of their presentations, they had to vote for the best one. The winner received a surprise present. Students were very enchanted to participate. Although they were not the perfect speakers, they had the opportunity to present their favourite book, they had the chance to express their opinions, to motivate their choice and the model for the presentation was an excellent provider for their fluency. The comfortable atmosphere and the fact that they knew that no one will correct their errors all the time or mark them, helped them to overcome various barriers.

The use of communicative activities also means getting confidence. This is another benefit of it. Most of the time, there are students in the classroom that are afraid to use English in front of their colleagues in order that they do not make fun of them. They lack confidence and the level of their anxiety seems high. Storytelling, drama and role play are some techniques used by communicative activities that have the role of making students confident and ready to take risks and get involved. Students love acting. They enjoy being someone else or have roles. The new identity offers them the opportunity to pass all the responsibility to the new character and thus they feel less stressed or anxious and feel free to express themselves. The textbooks that I use for my secondary school classrooms have texts based on dialogues which students enjoy.

Some other benefits of communicative activities are finding information and learning about culture. For example, the projects that students prepare for The Day of European Languages every year represent an excellent opportunity to find information and learn about culture at the same time. They find interesting and new things about all the European countries they read about and learn amazing things from different cultures.

The use of communicative activities by the optional courses, extracurricular activities, or summer activities represents some other benefits. My optional courses for kindergarten children, “English for Little Ones” and “Joyful English”, used in 2018, based on communicative activities were an excellent chance to introduce English from early stages. Children were so happy to sing, dance, draw and play, using English.

3. Conclusion

Communicative activities significantly enhance language learning by fostering interaction, fluency, and cultural awareness. They provide students with opportunities to use language in meaningful contexts, improving their confidence and motivation. By engaging in discussions, role plays, problem-solving tasks, and collaborative projects, learners develop both linguistic and social skills necessary for real-world communication.

Teachers play a crucial role in selecting and designing these activities to ensure an interactive and student-centered classroom environment. As language education continues to evolve, communicative activities remain essential for developing proficient and confident language users.

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